

EVOLUTION OF WRITING

Phase III

The primary object of writing is the creation of simple symbols which stand for the words in a language. The majority of symbols in the Sumerian, Egyptian, Cretan and Chinese systems of writing originated from depictions of objects found in the surrounding world.

They were fairly stylized, as shown by the cuneiform symbols for grain and the Cretan hieroglyphics of a hand depicted on the 10c and 25c stamps respectively. This gradual process of simplification can be seen on the 20c stamp in the metamorphosis of a Chinese jug into a bronze jug and eventually into a symbol still used in Chinese script. The similar development of Egyptian hieroglyphics is illustrated on the 40c stamp.

The ancient system of writing, in time, developed cursive, linear forms, which were abbreviated and changed through use in daily life.



Phase IV

The vast Semitic area extending from the Sinai Peninsula to Northern Syria, is the birthplace of prototypes of all Semitic writings.

The Phoenician writing depicted on the 25c stamp is a detail from an inscription found in Cyprus.

The 30c stamp features an extract from an Aramaic inscription of Barrakib of Zincirli.

The 50c stamp shows an excerpt from the inscription on a Moabite memorial stone.

The complete mesha inscription is depicted on the FDC. The letter A or *aleph* used as a motif in the date stamp is a common example of Phoenician, Palestinian and Aramaic sub divisions of Semitic writing.



Phase V

By 1000 BC one Phoenician alphabet system of thirty symbols existed, each representing a single consonant. Some time before 850 BC twenty-four of these symbols were adopted by Greeks as their language. The word *alphabet* is derived from the first two Greek letters, *alpha* and *beta*. With the development of reed pens, left to right writing was possible. Stamp 14c represents the Etruscan culture.

The Romans retained twenty of the Greek symbols out of twenty-three (stamp 25c).

The 30c stamps shows the Byzantium era script Cyrillic. The inkpot inscribed with an alphabet that includes Etruscan as well as Greek and Phoenician characters is depicted on FDC.

